

COMMUNICATIONS.

CONVENTION OF FRIENDS.

It is now generally conceded by abolitionists that the society of Friends occupies a pro-slavery position and that it stands in the way of the redemption of the Slave, and consequently that it is Anti-Christian.

In view of these facts, many of its members both at the East and West are dissolving their connection with the society, are coming out of the church, while others who are conspicuous in the Anti-Slavery cause, see no impropriety in remaining in connection with it and laboring to replace it upon the Anti-Slavery ground that it once occupied.

I would now suggest the propriety of calling a convention during the present winter to compare views on this important question.

E. H.

Washington Township, Dec. 20th 1845.

We hope the above proposition of our friend Enos Hillis will receive that careful consideration which its importance demands.

—[Eds.]

LETTER FROM NEW BRIGHTON.

FRIENDS EDITORS:

"The notorious," Abby Kelley has been here. After the description so often given of her by our "Watchmen of Zion," we might have expected to see attached to her a pair of horns, and a cloven foot. The people have looked, heard, examined; the same crowd has vanished like a phantom at the approach of morning's dawn. The churches here have been bolted and barred, hearers cautioned, threatened, exhorted; all has been done to prevent investigation that a band of inquisitors could do, while debarred of their old arguments, balder, fire, and fog. Devil, infidel, heretic, have been used so often that some new name must be invented to produce the desired effect. Short sighted mortals, to suppose the mind can thus be fettered.

"Can you lull the winged winds to sleep. Arrest the rolling world, or chain the deep?" I pity the poor clergy here, the chains they have fastened around the limbs of the bondman are evidently galling their own necks. They are afraid of each other, of their own hearers, and of the abolitionists. I only know of one remedy for them, which is to throw aside their infallibility, seek truth, and like men conform to its teachings; this would make them free indeed. Those who have built the churches here have been debarred the use of them: the upper story of a factory was the best place in a village containing five churches, where suffering Freedom might be defiled!! My countrymen, what strange delusion has stripped that sacred name of all its charms! Once the very mention of the name of liberty would brighten the eye and quicken the pulse of Americans; to secure its blessings they could wade through seas of blood, and scenes of danger. Must this apathy last forever? Is the sun of our liberty already on the decline, soon to be extinguished, in the starless night of slavery? Forbid it Heaven, forbid it man!

Our country can and must be free. The love of liberty, though crushed, has not been extinguished; long buried under piles of sectarian rubbish, the agitations of mind, like the heavings of an earthquake, has again thrown it upon the surface, the breath of free discussion may yet fan it into a flame.

Let it once be established that freedom of speech is as dangerous to Northern as Southern oppression, and the efforts of our professional gentlemen to suppress it will forever be in vain. Convince the people that those who can construe an old law into authority paramount and superior to the rights of man, are ever ready as occasion offers to wield it against black or white, that a pale face and straight hair would not avert the blow; show them that such can defend the monopoly of the soil and the divine rights of the landed aristocrats, as readily as the traffic in human flesh and the divine rights of slaveholders; convince them of these things and they will declare themselves at once independent of such unworthy teachers. The professional gentlemen here almost to a man, have opposed free discussion, the priest, the lawyer, and the physician, mysterious and indivisible as the Trinity, have been leagued against it. No wonder. They all fatten on the miseries of mankind, to alleviate those miseries is to destroy them, like Demetrius they feel their "craft is in danger." Oh people think for yourselves, trust not your inestimable rights to the hands of your political and spiritual guides, they will lead you into the quagmires of religious and political superstition which have already engulfed so many nations; they will tie you up with old laws, creeds, and constitutions, until like a fly in the spider's web you can't move a limb; you may then demand liberty as the people of England have demanded the repeal of the corn laws, a plume parchment and ink will form a barrier you can't surmount. Protect mental freedom and like Sampson's cords your fetters will drop from you, with scarce an effort: extend the blessings of freedom to the bleeding

bondman, and the eternal spirit of justice will reward you.

"That mercy you to others show
The same will show to you."

Act the reverse and your moral sentiments will become blunted, and yourselves prepared to become the destroyers of each other.

Follow not the multitude to do evil, suffer not yourselves to be harnessed to the car of church or state; while like that of Juggernaut they crush human victims. If you do, remember—

"The self same grave oppression delves
For others rights, is yawning for yourselves."

The strong holds of oppression here are badly shaken, the handwriting on the wall is visible, their glory has departed, happy for the world when it sinks into oblivion. The light of science, unobscured by the gloom of superstition, will then dawn upon the human mind.

Believe me, the "Thugs" here had nearly strangled thought, but their giant power is crippled, physiological and moral reform may yet progress. The soul of man may yet stand erect and dare to exercise its God-given rights.

Reformers, a world's redemption lies upon you, press on to the noble task, the united power of thought will do it, the voice of millions, like that of Deity, ere long will say "Let there be light."

Abby and her comrades have done much good here, they have troubled the waters, over which the angel of darkness has long brooded in death-like silence.

Nature's true nobles, shrink not from your herculean task. In the smiles of an approving conscience and the blessings of many a grief-worn heart you will find an ample recompense for all your toils.

HENRY BROWN.

New Brighton, Dec. 22, 1845.

FRIENDS EDITORS:—

I have perused with interest the reply of J. Barnaby, Jr. in your last, to my article the previous week, and am gratified to perceive a disposition of candor and a desire to maintain the true issue pervading his arguments.

Friend Barnaby charges the Society of Friends with being an anti-temperance, pro-slavery, war-sustaining Society—immoral and corrupt. I scarcely believe these accusations applicable to the worst man in our community; he must therefore pardon me for dissenting from him on this subject. To that part of his argument by which he conceives these charges are sustained, I have as yet made no reply. Absence from home will probably prevent me from giving attention to this matter next week, otherwise, I should have made it the subject of a separate article.

Friend Barnaby, it appears to me, has completely failed in his attempt to prove the above allegations. He produces several reasons to prove them. Let us examine their soundness.

First, the Society is pro-slavery and warlike for voting under this government. I take it for granted he will exonerate the Anti-Slavery Society of which he is a member from such a charge. I will also take their constitution and declaration of sentiment, as he takes Friends discipline, as the best exponent of their principles. Those documents declare "political action is a constitutional way" to be among the means they pledge themselves to use for the overthrow of slavery! The common acceptance of this is to vote and maintain the principles of the United States Constitution. Friends discipline, (new edition, page 22) clearly discourages such things, and goes as far as a Society, tolerating freedom of conscience, can well go to discourage it. Those who vote generally vote against Slavery, by doing thus, do they support it? To be pro-slavery, is to be in favor of Slavery. The term has no other definition. Now if he has proved that the Society is in favor of Slavery, I have entirely overlooked all his proof. He has proved truly, that Friends in many places are opposed to the measures and movements of the Anti-Slavery Societies, and every argument he has produced except the one I have just answered, goes to establish this one fact and nothing more.—Let us see. For illustration, take the Orthodox Friends of Salem, and apply to them this kind of reasoning and see what the result is. They close the doors of their meeting house against lecturers on temperance, abolition, peace, and the meetings of horse thief detecting societies, therefore are they in favor of grog-drinking, slaveholding, war-making and horse-stealing! They shut their doors against the Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, &c., and their ministers use their influence against them, and they disown their members for joining and "acting consistently" with those Societies; therefore are they opposed to the redemption of souls! They must also, according to this logic, be opposed to the marriage covenant, because they disown their members for marrying a certain way. One of our leading temperance men recently objected to the use of a meeting house by the Temperance

Society, because they disfigured and soiled the floor. Is he therefore in favor of rum-selling? In the case of closing meeting houses and disowning anti-slavery men from society noticed by J. B. he will not admit that objections to the measures and other matters among abolitionists, caused them to act thus, although there is much evidence to that effect as I will endeavor to show. On the same ground, I have a right to require him to admit that Orthodox Friends are in favor of the eternal damnation of souls. And that because each religious society and their ministers oppose each other their deliberate purpose is to send their fellows to everlasting perdition! And what becomes of the Ohio American A. S. Society? It is arraying a war, not to say a violent opposition against other Anti-Slavery Societies, and must therefore according to my apprehension of the logic of my friend, be pro-slavery also!

If friend Barnaby is informed on the subject of the disownment of I. T. Hopper, and the Green Plain Friends, he should, in order to give those meetings a fair hearing, (and I admit they need as favorable a construction of their motives as charity can give them) state that in each case those meetings at the same time retained many very active anti-slavery members, who, if they had acted "wholly" as he says, with reference to the one subject, would likewise have been disowned.—Besides, the charges in both instances were for doing other things not necessarily connected with abolitionism, but at variance with the discipline. I find anti-slavery Friends generally admit this, without justifying the acts of those meetings. I do the same.

A besetting sin of mankind appears to be, always to ascribe the worst conceivable motive to every act of an opponent.—Abolitionists understand this, yet "pro-slavery" fits their lips, about as well as do "love of excitement," "new things" "popularity," &c., that of their opponents.

To be favorable to "immediate emancipation," was once the rule or test of abolitionism. Now, thousands of that belief are "pro-slavery."

My friend reasons thus. A Yearly meeting, although it petition Congress for the abolition of slavery—remunstrate with the Legislature against the Black Laws, appoint an anti-slavery committee, admonish its members against voting for slaveholders, and against using the products of slave labor, and refuse to correspond with another Yearly meeting for its misusage of Anti-Slavery Friends, (and the *Bugle* recognizes this as an anti-slavery act,) although it does these, and other acts which when done by the *Anti-Slavery Society* are called anti-slavery acts, yet for not reading a document contrary to order, (and which some of the prominent members of the O. A. A. S. Society on the committee who examined it, agreed should not be read) and because a minority of the meeting, abolitionists among them (or till then called such) refused the use of the meeting house during the sessions of the meeting—for these causes, and for some opposition to the measures of abolitionists by several of the members—the Yearly meeting is pro-slavery!

Although the meeting passes many direct anti-slavery acts, my friend does not admit that such give it an anti-slavery character, but if it pass one fourth as many, or one in a hundred against an Anti-Slavery Society, he calls it pro-slavery. He is very good at charging but will give no credit. I trust he keeps a more fair book than this in his shop. But what makes it appear the more unreasonable, as I have already shown, is, that opposition to the anti-slavery movement is one thing and pro-slavery entirely another thing. He makes them identical. It is strange he cannot see that as the Society of Friends are so very much averse to a hiring priesthood, and to most of the measures of abolitionists, that they cannot oppose them without incurring the charge of pro-slavery, while he does not appear to perceive that the charge would be equally, yet, much more applicable to his Anti Slavery Society, for opposing another Anti-Slavery Association—the Liberty party. His idea of what constitutes pro-slavery is such that J. R. Giddings, Gerrit Smith, Cassius M. Clay and Lucretia Mott, as well as the Liberty party, deserve that cognomen.—I am not sure it is not becoming an honor to incur the appellation.

Whether I have succeeded in proving that the stigma of "pro-slavery" is not applicable to Friends, or not, I trust I have shown that the arguments of my friend fail to establish his charge. I cannot in the space allotted to me begin to answer the other accusations, viz: That Friends are anti-temperance, warlike, immoral and corrupt. I will refer him to those already convinced, not by the professions, but the practices of Friends, that they are the reverse of what he believes them to be. I do not take isolated cases, but the enlightened world, their friends and foes, bear a united testimony to the contrary of his belief. If the fact, that ministers in a religious Society oppose "bitterly" an Anti-Slavery Society,

makes the former pro-slavery, then why does not the bitter opposition of A. S. lecturers to religious Societies make them anti-religionists?

Are those members of a religious Society who are inactive in the cause of the slave entitled to any credit for the meritorious conduct of their fellow members? or does the rule work but one way? If it may be reversed, then are the pro-slavery members of a Society entitled to much credit for the passage of an act of the body which they have violently opposed.

The arguments of friend Barnaby, not already answered, may all be couched in the following propositions, viz:

1st. The Society of Friends make a high profession and disown members who, in its opinion, fail to come up to this standard.

2nd. B. B. D. being a member of that Society either does or does not believe it right to make these high professions and to disown its delinquents.

3rd. If he does not believe these regulations to be correct, he deceives the Society and the world, by remaining in connection with it.

4th. He cannot be ignorant of the fact, that the Society does not live up to its professions, and as it disowns its members for delinquency B. B. D. is bound to disown the Society, and this obligation rests even stronger upon him than it does on the Society to disown its members.

5th. The difference between the regulations of a Temperance or other reform Society and Friend's Society, is such that a member of the latter is necessarily implicated in the guilt of other members, even of other Yearly meetings acting under different disciplines, but in those reform associations, the members are no more responsible for the acts of the body to which they belong than are the different individuals in a neighborhood for the evil deeds of each other.

On the first, second and fifth propositions, I would remark, that I believe it right for all persons and societies to endeavor to do what to them appears to be right, and that the Society of Friends do no more. Also that it is right for all associations, and societies, and individuals in them, to manifest their dissent to every thing that appears to them to be wrong among them,—to "testify against them" and thus clear their own skirts; and that all societies and associations, and even individuals to a greater or less extent, do this. Every word of disapprobation of a wrong, is in effect, what Friends do when they disown a member. The idea is the same, whether it be incorporated in a discipline or be kept in the mind. The object of a protest against an error in a reform society, has in it the essence of a "testimony" against a delinquent member in a religious society. The form does not change the substance of the thing. The real difference is all in the imagination. And every argument which will apply to one, will apply to the other. It may be supposed that because a Friend after disownment is not permitted to participate in the meetings, constitutes a real difference, but is the feeling of repulsion not the same toward grog-sellers who intrude themselves into a temperance meeting, and meddle, and sway its action, and thwart its purposes, as against a disowned alienated member of Friends society, who should persist in a similar course in their meetings! I have heard no little grumbling among Abolitionists when thus introduced upon, (Temperance societies often formally disown delinquent members.) I am surprised at the sentiment that there is no kind of responsibility resting on one member of an Anti-Slavery Society for the action of the body. Why does my friend get up in those meetings and testify against their acts if he has no responsibility to bear in the case! Were he not an unassuming man he would leave us to infer that he merely desired to be heard. I cannot conceive of any other good object under the sun that could actuate him, than that which he disclaims. If I understand him, he will not protest against the act, if at our next A. S. Anniversary the Society adopts a resolution to support J. C. Calhoun for President in 1846. He will not be "responsible" for what they do, no more than are two neighbors for each others acts!

But the contrast is very great when I compare with this, his idea of the responsibility of a member of Friends' Society. It amounts to something like this. Were Abby Kelley Foster a member of the Ohio Yearly Meeting, and were she to labor as she does in behalf of the slave, and with her wonted devotedness to truth and duty, would labor in as well as out of that Society for the advancement of her cause, she would, if she did not withdraw on hearing of the disownment of an Anti-Slavery Friend in New York for quarrelling with an Anti-Slavery Minister, be a pro-slavery woman! He may well feel it his duty to withdraw if such be his idea of accountability.

There is perhaps no other society or organized association in which a majority do no rule. In the Society of Friends the opposi-

tion of three individuals may defeat the intention of 500 other members. When therefore the meeting refuses to take action on any subject the inference, with strangers to their order is that the majority have thus decided. This is a prevailing error with persons who pass sentence upon the society. If friend Barnaby in a temperance meeting votes with a minority when a resolution passes to put the law in force against the rum-seller, there is more semblance of justice in holding him accountable for the act, than there would in a Friends meeting where a majority overrule him and pass an act. In the first case he has assented to the principle that the majority have a right to rule, in the latter case he has made no such concession. The idea obtained to some extent that to "submit" in a Friends meeting is equivalent to a sanction, is incorrect. I "submit" when the constables takes my cow for a muster fine.

By the third proposition, my friend thinks if I do not unite with the regulations of society, I deceive it and the world. I do not agree to the correctness of many regulations in the Society. Nor yet do I deceive them. If they ever supposed me to be in favor of all regulations, they are undeceived long ere this or I do not know how to do it. As to the "world," so far as I can "shed a feeble ray around," my views are more or less known and never on proper occasions withheld.

4th proposition. I do not believe the society carries out his professed principles, but, that duty requires, that I should hence withdraw, is not so clear with me. If there be a society or a man anywhere who does do this. It is what I did not know. Our very weakness it appears to me, constitute one of the strongest reasons for forming ourselves into society—that by the potency of combined action, we may improve each other and the world. My friend and I have entirely different ideas of the object of religious societies. He thinks there should be no such society till men are perfect or can carry out their principles, that they could not contaminate each other, and then there would be no need of such a society.

I venture nothing in asserting that my friend Barnaby professes to believe in a doctrine which is even above the profession of Friends, which requires greater practical christian perfection to carry it out than any in the Society of Friends, they do not believe human nature competent to attain it. It is the doctrine of community, yet he doubtless feels quite as far short of carrying out his principles on this subject and probably others as do Friends any part of their professions which he can name. He admits that he does not carry out his principles. In this he is like myself and others.

Yet he disowns the society for the same omission of duty! There is the difference in favor of Friends; they do not understand their principles to require them not to vote, &c. as was the case with nearly all the non-resistants till recently. It is friend Barnaby's application of their principles that shows them to be so inconsistent in this matter. In his own case, he acknowledges that the carrying out of his principles or professions would lead him to a very different course.

The sum and substance of all his reasons for disowning Friends is, that they fail to put their principles into practice, and my friend will not deny being like them in this respect. That he did not do it while a member, nor does not now do it. I consider this a reason why he should not disown the society. I showed sufficiently in my last, how well the reform societies with which J. B. is connected, carry out their principles by hiring slaveholders to furnish them with cotton luxuries, &c.

J. Barnaby's idea, that, the right of a single member to disown the body being rather superior to the right of the mass to disown a member, does not appear so obvious to me. If he and I have a settlement of accounts, and a question of justice arises between us involving \$100, I should be induced to change my opinion of his honesty if he should persist in carrying out this principle of claiming to have a better idea of right than a whole community or society to which I would desire to have the matter referred. Why should not a declaration of my friend, in a society, and out of it of his opinions and his dissent from its erroneous course be a virtual disownment of the society so far as it is wrong! Would he feel guilty in his conscience for a wrong act of the society after laboring to the best of his ability to prevent it? Does he regard the fact that public sentiment might look upon him as implicated, as constituting him an evil doer! On leaving a society because it is unenformed, would he not leave a field of labor such as needed his labor most! When he goes in quest of a field of labor in a moral enterprise does he seek a neighborhood where they are already reformed? Does he expect to have more influence with strangers than among his acquaintances and friends! If the society is pro-slavery is it not likely to re-